

Lincoln Lore

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COOPER UNION LEGENDS SCRUTINIZED A Centennial Monograph

We have just commenced a five year period of centennial observances which mark some highly significant epochs in the life of Abraham Lincoln. One hundred years ago, on February 27, 1860, he delivered the most important political address of his career at Cooper Union in New York City. Often it is called "The speech that made him President." The story of this event which one author claimed "changed the course of American History," begins with his departure from Springfield, Illinois on February 22, 1860. It is brought to a close upon the return to his home on the following 14th of March.

Enough interest should be aroused in this extended series of Lincoln anniversary commemorations, interwoven with the progress of the Civil War, to encourage a critical examination of the literature covering the succeeding events. This would call for a close scrutiny of the sources used and a renewed effort to unearth unpublished data bearing on the specific event observed. The Cooper Union story might offer a good beginning for such an approach. A new book entitled *Abraham Lincoln Goes To New York* by Andrew A. Freeman was published by Coward-McCann Inc. on this February 12th just past. We might anticipate that it would contain much of the current information associated with Lincoln's speech. This monograph is not, however, an attempt to review Mr. Freeman's book, although often mentioned.

A recently discovered item of but six lines which appeared in *Dawson's Daily News* of Fort Wayne for February 23, 1860 is of special importance. Not only does it add to our knowledge of the route Lincoln traveled but it corrects several assumptions about the Cooper Union program which have been widely accepted. This is the significant citation:

"Hon. Abe Lincoln and wife came from the west this morning at 1 o'clock on the T.(Toledo) W.(Wabash) & W.(Western) R. R. and changing cars at this city (Fort

Hon. Abe Lincoln and wife came from the west this morning at 1 o'clock, on the T. W. & W. R. R., and changing cars at this city, went east. "Old Abe" looked like as if his pattern had been a mighty ugly one.

Retouched excerpt from DAWSON'S DAILY NEWS
February 23, 1860, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Wayne) went east. 'Old Abe' looks like as if his pattern had been a mighty ugly one."

The train from "the west" left Springfield on Wednesday, February 22nd at 10:15 a.m. and although one hour late at Fort Wayne arrived on time to make connections at 1:12 a.m. Thursday with the eastern express over the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago road. The depot but recently constructed from which they left is still standing and it is but one block from the old junction point of the Toledo, Wabash and Western R. R. The train

arrived in Pittsburgh on Friday at 2:20 a.m. Although due in Philadelphia at 11:00 a.m. it did not reach there until 1:00 a.m. Saturday morning.

The statement in the Fort Wayne paper that Lincoln's wife was with him when it is well known that she remained in Springfield, might imply that a scandal had

TOLEDO & WABASH RAILWAY.										GREAT WESTERN AND QUINCY & TOLEDO RAILWAYS.									
Westward Trains.					Eastward Trains.					Westward Trains.					Eastward Trains.				
Exp.	Mail.	Mis.	STATIONS.	Ms.	Mail.	Exp.	STATIONS.	Ms.	Mail.	Exp.	Mail.	Mis.	STATIONS.	Ms.	Mail.	Exp.	Mail.	Mis.	STATIONS.
P. M.	A. M.		LEAVE	ARRIVE	P. M.	A. M.		LEAVE	ARRIVE	P. M.	A. M.		LEAVE	ARRIVE	P. M.	A. M.		LEAVE	ARRIVE
5:20	4:50	04	Fort Wayne	149	12:10	11:45				0	State Line	231	4:30	4:45					
6:07	5:32	110	...Reno	135	11:10	10:47				7	Danville	226	4:14	3:22					
6:10	5:35	111	...Mahon	132	11:07	10:45				10	Bryant	223	4:04						
6:30	5:55	118	...Huntington	125	10:48	10:25				13	Callin	220	3:55	3:06					
6:40	6:10	124	...Antioch	119	10:33	10:07				20	Fairmont	213	3:31	2:59					
6:40	6:10	124	...Antioch	119	10:33	10:07				27	Homer	206	3:13	2:18					
7:05	6:27	131	...Lagro	112	10:15	9:45				33	Sidney	200	3:05						
7:21	6:45	136	...Wabash	107	9:56	9:30				40	Tolson	190	2:30	1:34					
8:00	7:40	150	...Perrin	93	9:10	8:45				48	Sadorus	185	1:55						
8:25	7:55	158	...Waverly	85	8:50	8:25				60	Bennet	178	1:30	12:47					
8:40	8:22	166	...Logansport	77	8:22	8:00				63	Cerro Gordo	164	12:51	12:24					
9:00	8:45	171	...Clymers	72	8:05	7:45				73	Oakley	160	12:45						
9:27	8:57	180	...Rockfield	68	7:35	7:20				76	Sangamon	157	12:25						
9:45	9:15	187	...Delphi	64	7:18	7:00				81	Breast	152	12:10	11:51					
10:07	9:35	195	...Buck Creek	45	6:45	6:37				93	Niantic	140	11:55	11:15					
10:35	10:00	203	...Lincolnton	40	6:20	6:15				100	McChesnut	128	10:55	10:41					
11:00	10:26	210	...West Point	38	5:56	5:55				106	Dawson	125	10:40	10:46					
11:23	10:50	217	...Nebraska	26	5:53	5:50				118	Jameson	120	10:35	10:25					
11:30	10:55	219	...Independence	24	5:28	5:30				120	Springfield	118	10:35	10:45					
11:45	11:10	224	...Atiles	19	5:12	5:15													
11:53	11:17	227	...Williamsport	16	5:03	5:07													
12:00	11:30	232	...West Lebanon	11	4:52	5:00													
12:10	11:43	236	...Marshallfield	7	4:37	4:45													
12:30	12:00	243	...State Line	0	4:20	4:30													
A. M.	NOON		ARRIVE	LEAVE	A. M.	P. M.													

Supplied by Wabash Railroad
Timetable showing connections at State Line

been discovered. However, there has been a tradition of long standing that some friends of Lincoln did accompany him on the trip. Mr. Freeman in his book points out that the name of the lady in question was Mrs. Stephen Smith who had her son Dudley with her (p.55). The author is in error however in claiming that Mrs. Smith was a relative of Mrs. Lincoln.

Through the kindness of Wayne C. Townley of Bloomington, Illinois we have been able to secure a copy of Mrs. Smith's reminiscences recorded when she was seventy years old in Bloomington's *The Daily Pantagraph* for February 19, 1895. Her maiden name was Elizabeth Dorian and she married Stephen Smith at Philadelphia on October 6, 1857. Her husband was a brother of Clark M. Smith who had married Ann Todd, a sister of Mary Todd Lincoln. Although she was a sister-in-law of Ann Todd Smith, Mrs. Stephen Smith was not related to Mary Todd Lincoln. The Lincolns traded at the Smith Brothers' store and Stephen and family were living next to the Lincoln home in February, 1860.

Mr. Lincoln upon learning that Mrs. Smith was planning a trip to her old home in Philadelphia early in 1860 suggested that she postpone her visit a few days. He made it known he was going east and would be pleased to assist her as she was traveling with a small child. So, after all, the woman with Mr. Lincoln, which the newspaper reported as his "wife," was in reality Mrs. Smith, but no mention was made of the infant, Dudley. With train arrivals at transfer stations and terminal at 1:00 a.m., 2:20 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. on consecutive days, we

can well understand why Mrs. Smith traveling with an infant child accepted Mr. Lincoln's offer to assist her on this tiresome journey.

Mrs. Lincoln had prepared a lunch basket for Abraham, and Mrs. Smith remembered that they ate out of their baskets for three days. She also stated that they sat up all the way in very crowded cars, and secured very little sleep. Mrs. Smith recalled that because Mr. Lincoln's old leather trunk, or valise, looked shabby that Mrs. Lincoln persuaded Mr. Lincoln to use hers, as it was of much better appearance. He worried about being unable to identify his baggage at the end of the trip. According to Mrs. Smith the train which should have arrived at 11 p.m. Friday night, did not reach Philadelphia until 1 o'clock Saturday morning. Mrs. Smith went to her old home and Mr. Lincoln continued on his journey to New York later that morning.

Mr. Freeman in his book to which we have referred quite naturally has accepted and utilized items from the Cooper Union story that have appeared in the best known publications on Lincoln. He presents John W. Starr's version of the route taken on the way to New York, presented in *Lincoln and the Railroads*. It states that "Lincoln left Chicago over the Pennsylvania Railroad or its connecting lines for Philadelphia" (p. 55). The clipping from *Dawson's Daily News* reveals that Lincoln did not

place the copy of his speech in the hands of Chicago critics. Apparently Mr. Medill had confused this manuscript with certain papers which he is said to have placed in Lincoln's hands during the Lincoln-Douglas debates. . .

Cephas Brainerd, one of the committee of young men who later annotated the address and prepared it for publication, states that David Davis, one of Lincoln's closest Illinois friends told him that "aside from the statement that he (Lincoln) had accepted an invitation to speak to the Republicans of New York City, he made no other allusion to the address." It was Brainerd's impression, after much correspondence had passed between the young men editors and Lincoln, that he "consulted no one when preparing it nor did he read it in whole or in part to any one."

The most authentic source for learning the facts about any Lincoln episode is his own writings, copies of which are now assembled and edited with great care in a nine volume work entitled *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. A study of the correspondence passing between Lincoln and James A. Briggs of New York would have prevented many errors which have crept into the Cooper Union story, relating to the arrangements for the address. Here again Mr. Freeman followed the most widely circulated story that the Young Men's Republican Union of New York City were Lincoln's sponsors (pp. 51-52).

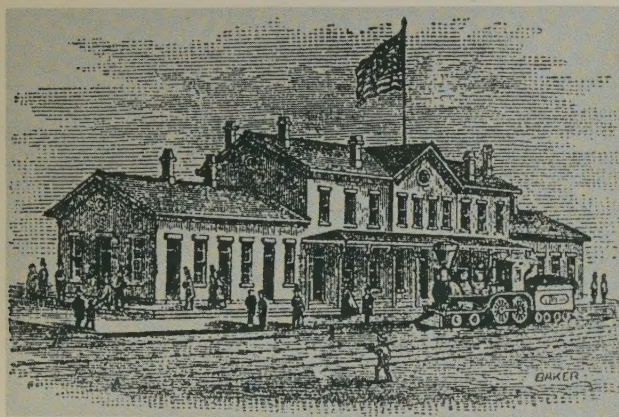
James A. Briggs was the key man in arranging for Abraham Lincoln to speak at Cooper Union. He served as a secretary for three young men, Joseph H. Richards, J. M. Pettengill and S. M. Tubbs who comprised a committee to prepare a program for the Plymouth Lecture Course to be presented in Henry Ward Beecher's church at Brooklyn.

On October 12, 1859 Briggs sent a telegram to Lincoln asking if he would speak at Beecher's church and offered to pay him \$200, which proposition Lincoln accepted. In a personal account of the proceedings Briggs tells of the invitations extended to political groups in New York to take over the sponsorship of the address, but the proposals were refused. He told in detail about the making of arrangements for Lincoln to appear in Cooper Union under the sponsorship of the already named three young men who had made the original bid for a speech. It was this same Plymouth Church group that handled the finances for the meeting and one of them, their treasurer, S. M. Tubbs, signed the \$200. check which Briggs sent to Lincoln at Exeter, New Hampshire. Lincoln acknowledged its receipt in a letter to Briggs dated March 3rd.

The Young Men's Republican Union did assist the Plymouth Church committee in building up an audience for Mr. Lincoln at Cooper Union. They were also responsible for the editing, annotating and printing the address for which they have received a well deserved recognition. One of their members, Charles C. Nott, wrote to Mr. Lincoln on February 9, 1860 inviting him to speak before a New York audience in March but this invitation was rejected. Mr. Freeman states that this letter advised Mr. Lincoln "of his new sponsor" but this is a mistake (p. 52). Mr. Briggs stated in an article published in Charles C. Leland's *Abraham Lincoln* (Appendix of second edition); "Mr. Lincoln did not come here at all under the auspices of the Young Men's Republican Union but he was invited to deliver a lecture in the Plymouth course."

Another tradition which has had wide circulation nominates William Cullen Bryant as the one chiefly responsible for Lincoln's visit to Cooper Union. George Haven Putnam was present with his father at the time of the speech and in 1909 the younger Putnam published a book entitled *Abraham Lincoln*. It had a wide circulation and went into many editions. The volume contained the Cooper Union address in full and 100 of the 288 pages featured incidents relating to the program. Thirteen years later Putnam contributed an article to the February 8, 1922 issue of *The Outlook* entitled "The Speech That Won the East for Lincoln." It is in this monograph that Putnam presents Bryant's claims for bringing Lincoln to Cooper Union.

Bryant according to Putnam "brought together in February 1860 in his office a group of citizens of whom my father was one . . . Bryant had a very high opinion of the clear-sightedness, patriotism and effective force of the young lawyer (Lincoln)." The group decided that



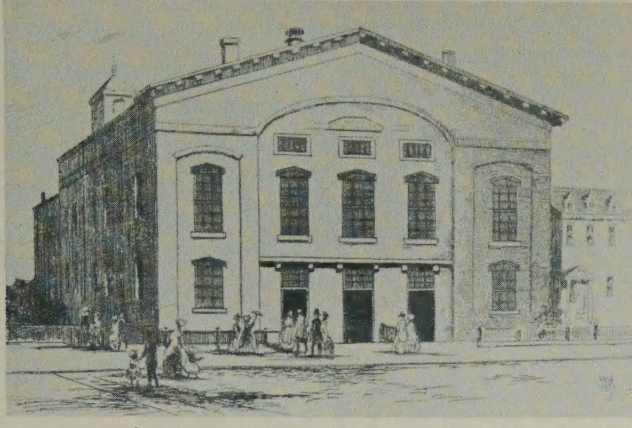
From PICTORIAL HISTORY OF FORT WAYNE—
Griswold

Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad station
constructed in 1858

go by the way of Chicago but went directly to Fort Wayne from Springfield. The reporter's description of Mr. Lincoln as one whose "pattern had been a mighty ugly one" contributes to his identification.

Sending Lincoln through Chicago would invite Mr. Freeman to use the almost unanimously accepted story that while in the city Lincoln visited Joseph Medill and Charles H. Ray of *The Tribune* and left his Cooper Union manuscript with them which he said he would pick up the following day (p. 54). Many years later Mr. Medill was a guest of honor at dinner in the nation's capital and dwelt in some detail on this purported incident. The *Washington Post* reports him as saying with reference to the Lincoln manuscript that he made "about 40 changes . . . the others to whom the address had been submitted were equally careful, and they made several amendments." Mr. Medill further stated, "When the speech was finally delivered, it was exactly word for word with the original copy which Lincoln gave us." After Lincoln reached New York and learned that he would speak at Cooper Union rather than Beecher's church he advised George A. Lincoln that he "had prepared his address with reference to its delivery in a miscellaneous audience in Brooklyn" and continued "I must rewrite my address in the main." Even on Sunday he told Mr. Bowen, who invited him to dinner, that he must refuse the invitation because he had further work to do on his manuscript. This revision clearly implies that the Cooper Union speech as printed in the papers differed to some extent from the original copy he brought with him from Springfield. Of course if Lincoln did not go by the way of Chicago so he did not

they would invite Lincoln to visit New York and that "the invitation should be accompanied by a check for expenses." In the conclusion of the article Mr. Putnam states: "It is well that Americans should remember the valuable service rendered by William C. Bryant in helping the selection as a leader . . . the great Captain,



From Bernhardt Wall's "Following Abraham Lincoln"
Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Lincoln attended morning services here on both Sunday, February 26 and Sunday, March 11, 1860.

Abraham Lincoln." We have observed Lincoln had been invited and agreed to come to New York three months before Mr. Bryant held that February meeting. There is no evidence available to support the tradition that Bryant or any of his associates ever wrote to Lincoln about coming to New York or offered to forward to him money which would cover his expenses.

In the same magazine article in which Mr. Putnam presents the Bryant tradition, and somewhat connected with it, he gives in detail the most widely circulated tradition associated with the Cooper Union engagement which he had also mentioned in his 1909 book. The fact that Robert Lincoln was still living when the magazine article was written might imply a further confirmation of the story which Putnam claims came from Robert himself. This is the version in question.

"Years after the war, I heard from Robert Lincoln that his father had in January been planning to make a trip Eastward to see the boy, who was then in Phillips Exeter Academy. His father wrote to Robert that he had just won a case and that soon as his client B. made payment he would arrange for the trip. A week or more later Lincoln wrote again to the boy, expressing his disappointment that the trip would have to be postponed. 'B. cannot pay me for some time' said Lincoln 'and I have at this time no other money.'

"A week later Lincoln wrote again to his son, reporting that he was coming after all. 'Some men in New York' he said, 'have asked me to come to speak to them and have sent me money for the trip. I can manage the rest of the way.' " Mr. Putnam's implication is that this money which made the trip possible was the sum received from the Bryant group. This story in the light of available authorized records is preposterous. In the first place Lincoln had been guaranteed \$200 for the trip three months earlier. Furthermore, about the time that the traditional Bryant meeting was being held, and also about the time Lincoln was said to have had no money for the trip, he made two deposits in a Springfield bank. On February 1, 1860 there is credited to Lincoln's account \$539.95 and on February 6, 1860 there was an additional deposit of \$265.00. Lincoln used his own money to pay his way as far as Exeter at least. He wrote to a correspondent: "I made the speech, and left for New Hampshire where I have a son in school, neither asking for pay not having any offered me. Three days after, a check for \$200. was sent to me at N. H." The day after he returned home he added \$604. to his bank account.

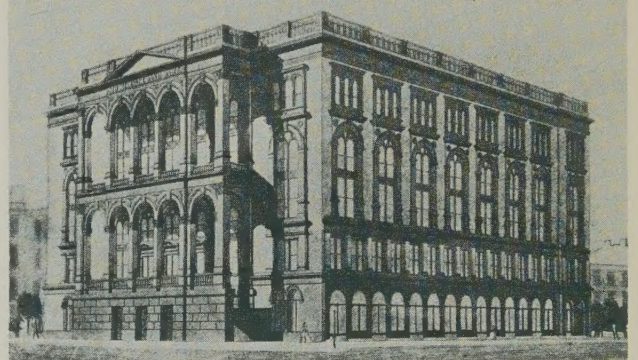
The feature of the Robert Lincoln story however, also said to have originated with him, is the statement that he failed on fifteen of the sixteen subjects submitted on the examination papers for entrance to Harvard Univer-

sity. Instead of coming back home he was sent to Phillips Exeter Academy to make further preparations to enter the university. According to W. E. Barton in his *Life of Lincoln* Robert felt that "If he had failed in less than fifteen studies his father might not have delivered the Cooper Union speech, or having delivered it might have returned from New York direct to Springfield." The implication is that if Robert had not failed in the entrance examinations Lincoln therefore would not have come east and hence missed the presidency. Mr. Freeman uses a condensed form of these untenable conclusions in his book (p. 54).

Without detracting in the least from the filial interest which Abraham Lincoln undoubtedly had in his son Robert and his education, the assumption that his eastern trip was primarily to visit his son in New Hampshire cannot be maintained. Nearly six months had passed since the examination failures and the parents had most certainly been kept informed about Robert's scholastic standing. The urgency of a visit to ascertain his progress had long since past. Mr. Briggs had suggested a November date for the speech but Mr. Lincoln changed it to February, ten weeks later. This postponement does not imply much anxiety on the part of Mr. Lincoln, or the family, over Robert's situation in New Hampshire.

Lincoln wrote his wife immediately upon reaching Exeter on March 1st and probably told her how Robert was getting along but that letter apparently has not been preserved. He wrote to her again at Exeter on March 4th and in the conclusion of his letter makes this statement with reference to his speeches in New England: "I have been unable to escape this toil. If I had foreseen it I think I would not have come East at all." This statement does not make it appear as if his primary purpose for the trip had been to see Robert, although undoubtedly he enjoyed his company for a greater part of four days.

Probably no activity of Lincoln's during the New York visit, outside the delivery of the address itself, has been given more publicity than Lincoln's visit to the Five Points Mission. A monograph by James N. Adams, which appears in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* for March, 1957 should settle the question as to when the visit was made and who accompanied Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Freeman accepts the tradition that the visit to the mission was made on Sunday afternoon, February



THE OUTLOOK, February 8, 1922
Cooper Union as it appeared in 1860

26 and that Lincoln's Illinois friend, Elihu B. Washburne went with him (pp. 64-65).

Here again, however, Mr. Briggs comes into the picture to establish the date and also the identity of the host. Mr. Adams in his magazine article refers to documents that make it certain the visit occurred Sunday afternoon, March 4th., also that Hiram Barney accompanied Mr. Lincoln. Briggs and Barney met Lincoln when he returned from Bridgeport, Connecticut on Sunday, March 4th, and that morning Lincoln paid his second visit to Plymouth Church, this time with Mr. Briggs. In a letter which Briggs wrote to Salmon P. Chase he stated that in the afternoon "Mr. Barney went with him (Lincoln) to the House of Industry at Five Points and then invited him home to tea." That evening Briggs took Lincoln to the Church of the Divine Unity to hear the Rev. Dr. Edwin H. Chapin.

Lack of space will not permit the close scrutiny of

several other Cooper Union legends but they will be pointed out so that the reader may focus the light of documentary evidence upon them and draw his own conclusions about accepting or rejecting them.

The *Detroit Press* for February 7, 1869 stated that "Henry Ward Beecher who had met Lincoln before, invited him to make the speech in Plymouth church and he consented to do so."

Robert H. Browne in his biography states that Lincoln upon reaching New York "called early on the man of the *Tribute* and that Horace Greeley told him, 'We will get ready for your speech. We shall engage the Cooper Hall. I'll do that much on my own account.'"

Henry B. Rankin in his *Intimate Sketches of Abraham Lincoln* gives this version of Lincoln's arrival in New York as remembered by the son of Henry C. Bowen. It was supposed to be late on Saturday afternoon and he went immediately to Bowen's office before going to his hotel. Lincoln said to Bowen, "I am just in from Springfield, Illinois, and I am very tired. If you have no objection I will lie down on your lounge here and you can tell me about the arrangements for Monday night."

William Herndon in his biography states that "After the meeting closed, the newspaper reporters called for slips of his speech. . . . He didn't suppose the newspapers cared to print his speech verbatim." There are some traditions stating that he read his manuscript, others that he held it in his hand and various theories as to when it was given to the printers, and whether or not he got it back. Mr. Freeman states that it was returned to him (p. 70). In another place, however, Mr. Freeman states it was destroyed (p. 93).

Mr. R. C. McCormick states that Lincoln met an old Springfield friend who had made \$100,000 and lost it and inquired of Lincoln how much he was worth. It would be of interest to know the name of this friend.

COOPER UNION ITINERARY

Wed.	February 22	—Leaves Springfield
Thurs.	February 23	—Arrives Fort Wayne
Fri.	February 24	—Arrives Pittsburgh
Sat.	February 25	—Arrives Philadelphia
Sat.	February 25	—Guest at Astor House, New York
Sun.	February 26	—Visits Plymouth Church, Brooklyn
Mon.	February 27	—Cooper Union, New York, N. Y.
Tues.	February 28	—Railroad Hall, Providence
Wed.	February 29	—Arrives at Exeter for visit with Robert
Thurs.	March 1	—Phoenix Hall, Concord
Thurs.	March 1	—Smyth's Hall, Manchester
Fri.	March 2	—City Hall, Dover
Sat.	March 3	—Town Hall, Exeter
Sun.	March 4	—Attends church at Exeter
Mon.	March 5	—City Hall, Hartford
Tues.	March 6	—Union Hall, New Haven
Wed.	March 7	—Town Hall, Meridian
Thurs.	March 8	—Harris Hall, Woonsocket
Fri.	March 9	—Town Hall, Norwich
Sat.	March 10	—Washington Hall, Bridgeport
Sun.	March 11	—Attends Plymouth Church a.m.
Sun.	March 11	—Visits Five Points Mission p.m.
Sun.	March 11	—Attends Church of Divine Unity eve.
Mon.	March 12	—Leaves for Springfield over Erie Road
Tues.	March 13	—Changes trains at Toledo
Wed.	March 14	—Arrives in Springfield



From the Foundation Collection

An 1860 presidential campaign badge. Ambrotype copy of photograph made by Mathew B. Brady in New York on February 25, 1860, the Saturday before the delivery of the Cooper Union Address.

There still seems to be some confusion about how many sittings Lincoln had at the Mathew Brady gallery, as many as three have sometimes been identified as having been made at this time. It is to be regretted that Mr. Freeman uses a likeness of Lincoln that was made in Springfield rather than New York as a Brady photograph taken on February 27 (opp. p. 64).

John W. Starr Jr. in his *Lincoln and the Railroads* reviews the story that Erastus Corning, president of the New York Central Railroad, heard Lincoln at Cooper Union. In conversation with him the next morning at the Astor House Corning said, "Would you entertain an offer from the New York Central Railroad, Mr. Lincoln, to become its General Counsel at a salary of \$10,000 a year?"

James B. Merwin, who met Lincoln in the Astor Hotel according to John W. Starr, Jr., "accompanied Lincoln to New England on his speech making tour. . . . Merwin proved a valuable companion."

With respect to his return trip to Illinois Lincoln stated in a letter to his wife, "If the trains do not lie over Sunday, of which I do not know, I hope to be home tomorrow week (Monday, March 12). Once started I shall come as quick as possible." Charles T. White, a political editor for the *New York Tribune* and author of several Lincoln monographs has contributed to our knowledge of Lincoln's return trip. He states that Lincoln left New York by the Erie Railroad which traversed the southern tier of counties in the state of New York. White once lived at Hancock, New York through which the train passed. Word had been passed along about Lincoln's presence on the train. At Hancock, according to an observer, Lincoln "stepped off the car to greet and shake hands with the natives." This was repeated at other train stops, according to Mr. White. Tuesday Mr. Lincoln boarded the Toledo and Wabash and Western R. R. at Toledo which passed through Fort Wayne at 5:20 p.m. and reached Springfield at 6:50 a.m. Wednesday morning, March 14th.

The significance of this outstanding gem of Lincoln's political oratory would seem to demand that the Cooper Union Speech should be placed in a historical setting. Although the address was written one hundred years ago there should be an attempt to weed out the purely legendary stories that prevent a clear understanding of the writing and delivery of the address, as well as a true picture of the events associated with the masterpiece.

Louis A. Warren, Director Emeritus
Lincoln National Life Foundation